



CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT
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POLICY OUTLOOK

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Iraq's Forces

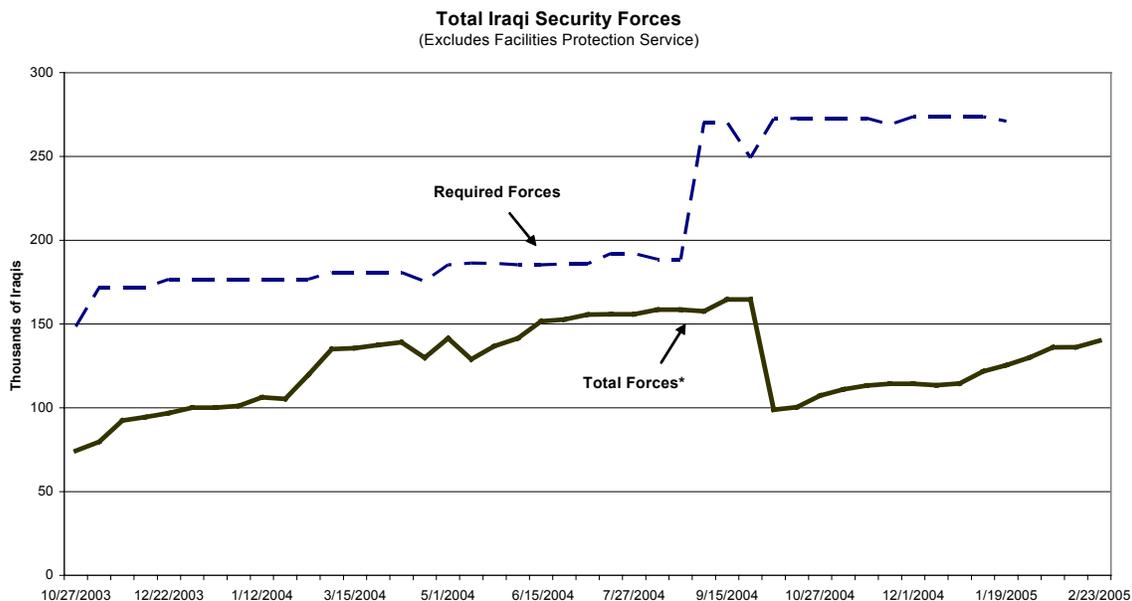
The Hole in the U.S. Security Strategy?

Jeffrey Miller, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Training Iraq's security forces is the centerpiece of President George W. Bush's strategy in Iraq. To the extent that training records can be uncovered in the muddle of conflicting reports, the chronicle of the past eighteen months raises grave doubts about the strategy's hope of success. Pentagon figures show that not only has there been no progress over the past year, but the gap between the total number of Iraqi security forces and the total required is now almost *twice the size* of the gap reported fourteen months ago.

The total number of all security forces was reported to have more than doubled in the three months from October 2003 to January 2004. "We're making very good progress," said Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on CNN in March 2004. "We're up to over 200,000 Iraqis that have been trained and equipped." What he failed to point out was that 74,000 of those 200,000 were members of the Facilities Protection Service—building guards with less than one week of training. And of the 75,000 Iraqi police officers included in the total, 60,000 were entirely untrained. At the time, only a paltry 2,300 qualified as fully trained.

In July 2004, the outgoing head of Iraqi security force training, General Paul Eaton, offered a devastatingly grim assessment: "It hasn't gone well," he admitted. "We've had almost one year of no progress." Shortly thereafter the official numbers began to reflect that reality. In September, the Pentagon stopped reporting untrained security forces, and the total number plummeted from 165,000 to fewer than 100,000. In the course of one two-week reporting period, the total force dropped 40 percent. At almost the same time, the number of required forces rose from 190,000 to more than 270,000.

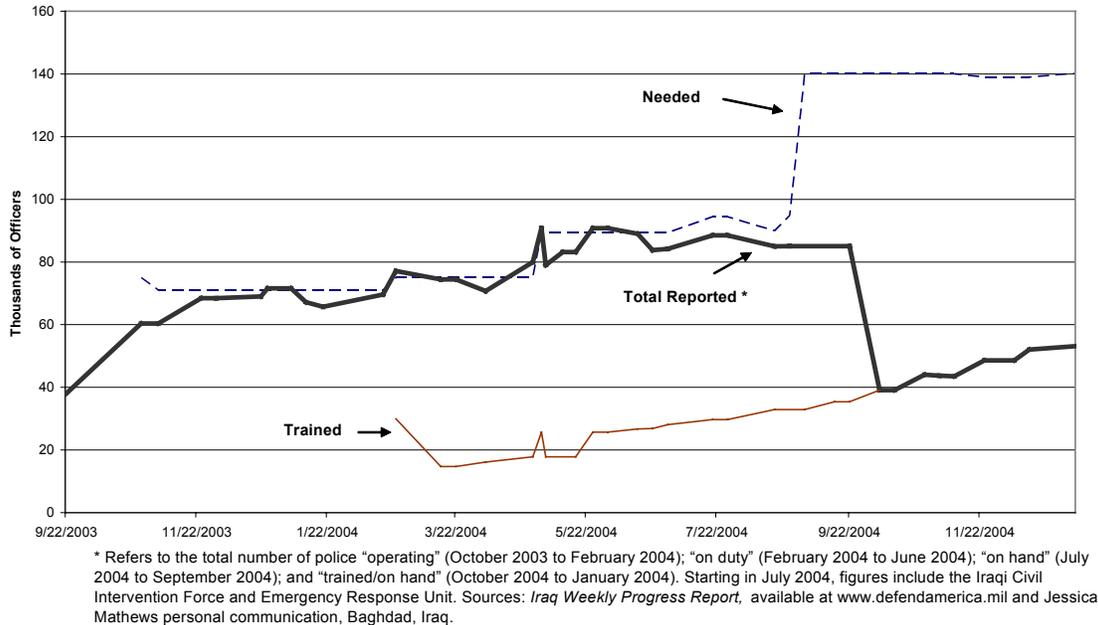


* Refers to the total number of security forces "operating" (October 2003 to February 2004); "on duty and in training" (February 2004 to June 2004); "on hand" (July 2004 to September 2004), "trained/on hand" (October 2004 to January 2005); and "trained and equipped." (February 2005). Source: *Iraq Weekly Progress Report*, available at www.defendamerica.mil.

Americans who try to follow the numbers—including, apparently, the country's top military officers—soon found themselves hopelessly confused. In one four-hour period in early February 2005, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the deputy chairman provided two entirely different reports on the number of fully trained and equipped Iraqi battalions—48 and 74—a difference of 20,000 people.

The following charts on pages 3 and 4 (based on official figures published weekly at www.defendamerica.mil), which track the actual and required number of Iraqi police and army troops, illustrate the confusion. Forces change names. The Civil Defense Corps is now the National Guard. Sometimes police are just the police; at other times the number includes the Civil Intervention Force and the Emergency Response Unit. Sometimes army numbers include the National Guard, the Prevention Force, and the Special Operations Force; sometimes they do not. Categories of readiness come and go without explanation. At one point, data are broken into three subcategories—untrained, partially trained, and fully qualified. Later, the seemingly most relevant category—fully qualified—disappears, leaving only the untrained and trained categories. Other forces are first labeled as operating forces, then forces on duty, then on hand, and, finally, trained/on hand—all terms with different meanings.

Training Status of Iraqi Police



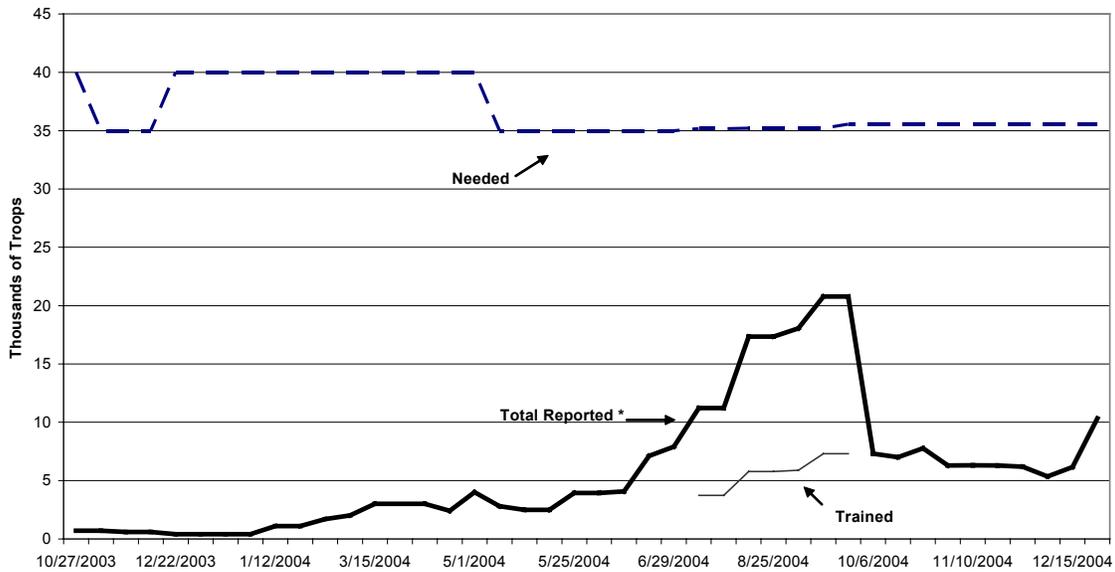
Yet the graphs reveal what these gyrations obscure: precious little progress has been made. The graph of the Iraqi police force, for example, shows essentially two lines. The upper line, "total reported," reflects data that have been used in countless official speeches and talking points as evidence that training is proceeding apace. The lower line, "trained," represents the number of officers who have actually received some training. This line has been painfully close to flat for fourteen months.

Even those with training have not had much of it. The norm for United Nations police training is at least twelve weeks. According to a recent State Department report, two-thirds of the 51,000 trained Iraqi police officers have had only three weeks of instruction. In addition, notwithstanding the acute need for more trained officers, less than 15 percent of the \$1.9 billion allocated for police training from October 2003 to the end of 2004 has actually been spent.

The graphs reveal that Congress and the public need urgent answers to a number of questions. Just how difficult and expensive is this task going to be? Why has it gone so poorly? What needs to be done differently? How many years will it really take to reach the required numbers? Why has spending on this priority task been so slow? Are the "trained" forces trained in any real sense of the word? Or are men being put on the streets who are likely to desert with their new equipment at the first sign of serious threat? What are the desertion rates from each force and the infiltration rates by antigovernment insurgents?

One trend seems constant: members of Congress of both parties who have visited Iraq on fact-finding missions report receiving estimates that are only a fraction of the numbers being cited in Washington. "It's impossible to get reliable answers from the military and from the administration," complained Senator Mark Dayton, a Democrat from Minnesota, after a classified meeting with top Pentagon officials.

Training Status of Iraqi Army



* Refers to the total number of troops "operating" (October 2003 to February 2004); "on duty" (February 2004 to June 2004); "on hand" (July 2004 to September 2004); and "trained/on hand" (October 2004 to January 2005). Starting July 2004, figures include the Iraqi Intervention Force and Special Operations Force. Source: *Iraq Weekly Progress Report*, available at www.defendamerica.mil.

On the defensive, Secretary Rumsfeld asserted that “it is flat wrong to say that anyone is misleading anyone.” While that may be true, the secretary added: “Numbers are just numbers. Capability and capacity to do things are something other than that.” He cannot have it both ways. Either the numbers he and the president cite as evidence of progress mean something or they do not. If they do not, as the contradictory numbers and assessments increasingly suggest, we must face the question of what actually underpins the U.S. security strategy in Iraq. ■

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